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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 10352

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, NI, PDEV
SUBJECT: AWOLOWO REPLIES TO HIS CRITICS

REF: LAGOS A-93

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. IN RESPONSE TO ATTACKS FROM HIS MANY POLITICAL OPPONENTS, CHIEF AWOLOWO ON AUGUST 14 ISSUED A DETAILED PRESS STATEMENT DENYING THAT HE IS A DICTATOR, A TRIBALIST OR A REACTIONARY. THE CHIEF BRANDED ALL SUCH ACCUSATIONS AS "RIDICULOUS AND FALSE" AND ADDED THAT THE "PERSISTENT DENIGRATING CAMPAIGN TENDS TO MAKE IT APPEAR AS IF THE WHOLE WORLD HAS DESERTED "'AWO'S CAMP.'"

2. WITHOUT NAMING INDIVIDUALS, AWOLOWO DIVIDED HIS ACCUSERS INTO THREE GROUPS:
--"THE FIRST MAIN GROUP CONSIST OF SOME OF MY FORMER COLLEAGUES IN THE BANNED ACTION GROUP WHO REMAINED LOYAL TO MY LEADER-SHIP UP TILL MY RELEASE FROM PRISION IN AUGUST 1966." ASIDE FROM THEIR PERSONAL AMBITION, ACCORDING TO AWOLOWO, "AFTER ABOUT TWO DECADES OF EXCLUSION FROM POWER, THEY NO LONGER WANT TO BE IN
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OPPOSITION. AND THE WAY TO POWER, IN THEIR CALUCALATION, IS INTER-ETHNIC ALLIANCE IN WHICH LEADERSHIP IS CONCEDED TO A PARTICULAR ETHNIC GROUP. OVER THE YEARS, AND IN SPITE OF THEIR PROTESTATIONS TO THE CONTRARY, THEY HAVE LOST ALL SENSE OF IDEOLOGICAL DIRECTION."
--"THE SECOND MAIN GROUP CONSISTS OF FORMER

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MEMBERS OF THE ACTION GROUP WHO BROKE AWAY IN 1962.
IT IS THIS GROUP THAT ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
CHARGE OF VINDICTIVENESS AGAINST ME AND FOR ITS
ACTIVE DISSEMINATION ALL OVER THE COUNTRY."
--"THE THIRD MAIN GROUP CONSISTS OF A FAIRLY
LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO REPRESENT PRACTICALLY
ALL THE SCALES IN NIGERIA'S POLITICAL GAMUT.
THEY ARE NOT HOSTILE, NOT HATEFUL: AT ANY RATE,
THEY DO NOT APPEAR TO BE IN THE SAME EMOTIONAL
BRACKETS AS THE OTHER GROUPS. INDEED, MOST OF
THEM CAN BE SAID TO BE WELL-MEANING, BUT MISGUIDED."

3. AWOLOWO CONCLUDED HIS DISCURSIVE STATEMENT:
"I HAVE LEARNED FROM A STUDY OF THE LIVES OF
GREAT RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND PROPHETS LIKE BUDDAH,
JESUS CHRIST, AND MOHAMMED, AS WELL AS GREAT
POLITICAL LEADERS LIKE AMENHOTEP IV, PHARAOH
OF EGYPT (1360-1350 B.C.), GHANDI AND NEHRU
(BOTH OF INDIA), THAT WHILST ONE CAN BE FLEXIBLE
ABOUT MEANS AND METHODS, ONE MUST BE ABSOLUTELY
RIGID OR IMMUTABLE ABOUT GOALS, PRINCIPLES AND
IDEALS, ONCE ONE IS CONVINCED THAT ONE IS
RIGHT."

4. PREDICTABLY ENOUGH, AWOLOWO'S REMARKS DREW
PUBLIC COMMENT WITH CA MEMBER ALHAJI ABUBAKAR
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RIMI DESCRIBING HIS STATEMENT AS "FRIVOUS,
SHALLOW AND VERY UNIMPRESSIVE" AND CHALLENGING THE
CHIEF TO NAME HIS OPPONENTS. RIMI ADDED, "IT IS STILL GOOD
FOR THE AMBIIOUS CHIEF TO VIE FOR NIGERIA'S PRESIDENCY SO
THAT HIS POLITICAL COFFIN MAY FINALLY BE NAILED." END UNCLASSIFED.

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5. COMMEN: TWO ASPECTS OF AWOLOWO'S STATEMENT
ARE PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY. FIRST, THE FACT
THAT AWOLOWO FELT COMPELLED TO REPLY TO
THE VARIOUS CHARGES, PARTICULARLY TO THE
ACCUSSATION THAT HE IS A TRIBALIST, MAY INDICATE
THAT AWOLOWO'S VARIOUS OPPONENKR ARE SCORING POINTS
AGAINST HIM IN THESE VERY SENSITIVE AREAS.
NIGERIAN POLITICAL SCIENTISTS AND HISTORIANS ASSURE
US THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE BASIS FOR THE
ACCUSATION THAT AWOLOWO INTRODUCED TRIBALISM INTO
NIGERIAN POLITICS, BEGINNING WITH THE CHIEF'S
FAILURE IN THE 1940'S TO BREAK INTO MACAULEY-
AZIKIWE'S NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NIGERIAN CITIZENS
(NCNC) AND HIS SUBSEQUENT DECISION TO PARLEY THE

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YORUBA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION, EGBE OMO ODUDUWA,
INTO A SEPARATE POLITICAL PARTY, THE ACTION GROUP,
IN 1951. THE YORUBA TONE TO AWOLOWOISM APPARENTLY
CONTINUES UNABATED. FOR EXAMPLE, SEVERAL NIGERIANS
HAVE TOLD US THAT THE COTERIE OF SUPPORTERS AT
AWOLOWO'S HOUSE/HEADQUARTERS IN APAPA REMAINS
ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY YORUBA, PARTICULARLY
IJEBU YORUBAS FROM AWOLOWO'S HOME AREA. IN 1979
WHEN NIGERIAN POLITICANS ARE SUPPOSED, AT LEAST
OVERTLY, TO ESCHEW TRIBALISM, THIS PARTICULAR ASPECT
OF THE AWOLOWO MOVEMENT IS A USEFUL WEAPON FOR
HIS OPPONENTS.

6. SECONDLY, WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT
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AWOLOWO'S CATALOG OF OPPONENTS INDICATES THE
AWOLOWO CAMPAIGN IS NOT GOING WELL AND THE CHIEF
IS EVEN HAVING PROBLEMS PUTTING BACK TOGETHER
HIS OLD ACTION GROUP COALITION IN THE WEST.
IN THAT REGARD, A CA MEMBER AND ANTI-AWOLOWO YORUBA
POLITICAL, OLADUNNI AYANDIPO, TOLD US ON AUGUST 16 THAT SOME
TYPE OF AWOLOWO STATEMENT REFLECTIONG HIS PROBLEMS HAD BEEN
IN THE WORKS FOR SOME TIME. AYANDIPO ADDED THAT IN HIS VIEW,
THE GERMAN SURVEY (REF AIRGRAM) WHICH SUGGESTED THAT AWOLOWO
WOULD GET 70-90 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN YORUBALAND WAS "SIMPLY
RIDICULOUS." HE DOUBTED WHETHER AWO COULD MUSTER 50 PERCENT
OF THE VOTE EVEN IN HIS BEST AREAS SUCH AS OGUN STATE.
WYMAN

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